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FLOOR DEBATE

March 28, 2001 LB 808

this year is a decision year. If we want to avoid a significant cost to the state and to local subdivisions conducting these programs, it is necessary to pass this bill this year, the current bill, LB 808. Under the act, local cities, villages, and fire protection districts were authorized, not required, to begin a local program on July the 1st, 2000. This was the date when they could begin counting points to determine where volunteers qualified as active volunteers for the purpose of this act. At the end of the first year of service, July 30, 2001, the local bodies would (inaudible) tally up the number of active volunteers for the first year of service year. They would set aside funds in the next budget for the individual accounts as specified in the original ordinance or resolution setting up the program. As the act stands now, the funds set aside must be sent to the State Treasurer. They would be administered by the Public Employees Retirement Board, and invested by the State Investment Office. In addition, there is a series of mandated reports to be made to the State Fire Marshal. If the act is not amended as provided in LB 808, the state would have to assume responsibility for the investment and manage of these funds, even though the state does not have any financial interest in the program, and the cost, which is large, will be subtracted from the benefits of the volunteers. The green copy of LB 808 does the following things. It strikes out...takes the state of Nebraska out of the programs. The programs are strictly local, operating within general statutory limits. First, the bill would remove the requirements for midyear reporting to the State Fire Marshal. Reports would be only required only once a year at the end of the year of service. Remove the minimal amount contribution requirements, leaving the amount of contribution to be determined by the local subdivisions. Remove the Public Employees Retirement Board from administering the local funds. Removes the responsibility for the State Treasurer to account for the funds. Removes the State Investment Officer for the responsibility for investing the local funds. And remove all current duties of the Fire Marshal regarding the review and accounting reports on local programs. Removes the ten year service requirement to qualify for future awards, leaving the terms of service for qualification up to local discretion. Leaves administrative and investment decision up to local subdivision, authorizing local officials to act as